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If You Don't Do This, You Are Headed for Trouble

BACK IN 1898, A TRAGIC THING HAPPENED IN ROCKLAND COUNTY, New York. A child had died, and on this particular day the neighbors were preparing to go to the funeral. Jim Farley went out to the barn to hitch up his horse. The ground was covered with snow, the air was cold and snappy; the horse hadn't been exercised for days; and as he was led out to the watering trough, he wheeled playfully, kicked both his heels high in the air, and killed Jim Farley. So the little village of Stony Point had two funerals that week instead of one.

Jim Farley left behind him a widow and three boys, and a few hundred dollars in insurance.

His oldest boy, Jim, was ten, and he went to work in a brickyard, wheeling sand and pouring it into the molds and turning the brick on edge to be dried by the sun. This boy Jim never had a chance to get much education. But with his natural geniality, he had a flair for making people like him, so he went into politics, and as the years went by, he developed an uncanny ability for remembering people's names.

He never saw the inside of a high school; but before he was

forty-six years of age, four colleges had honored him with degrees and he had become chairman of the Democratic National Committee and Postmaster General of the United States.

I once interviewed Jim Farley and asked him the secret of his success. He said, "Hard work," and I said, "Don't be funny."

He then asked me what I thought was the reason for his success. I replied: "I understand you can call ten thousand people by their first names."

"No. You are wrong," he said. "I can call fifty thousand people by their first names."

Make no mistake about it. That ability helped Mr. Farley put Franklin D. Roosevelt in the White House when he managed Roosevelt's campaign in 1932.

During the years that Jim Farley traveled as a salesman for a gypsum concern, and during the years that he held office as town clerk in Stony Point, he built up a system for remembering names.

In the beginning, it was a very simple one. Whenever he met a new acquaintance, he found out his or her complete name and some facts about his or her family, business and political opinions. He fixed all these facts well in mind as part of the picture, and the next time he met that person, even if it was a year later, he was able to shake hands, inquire after the family, and ask about the hollyhocks in the backyard. No wonder he developed a following!

For months before Roosevelt's campaign for President began, Jim Farley wrote hundreds of letters a day to people all over the western and northwestern states. Then he hopped onto a train and in nineteen days covered twenty states and twelve thousand miles, traveling by buggy, train, automobile and boat. He would drop into town, meet his people at lunch or breakfast, tea or dinner, and give them a "heart-to-heart talk." Then he'd dash off again on another leg of his journey.

As soon as he arrived back East, he wrote to one person in each town he had visited, asking for a list of all the guests to whom he had talked. The final list contained thousands and thousands of names; yet each person on that list was paid the subtle flattery of

getting a personal letter from James Farley. These letters began "Dear Bill" or "Dear Jane," and they were always signed "Jim."

Jim Farley discovered early in life that the average person is more interested in his or her own name than in all the other names on earth put together. Remember that name and call it easily, and you have paid a subtle and very effective compliment. But forget it or misspell it—and you have placed yourself at a sharp disadvantage. For example, I once organized a public-speaking course in Paris and sent form letters to all the American residents in the city. French typists with apparently little knowledge of English filled in the names and naturally they made blunders. One man, the manager of a large American bank in Paris, wrote me a scathing rebuke because his name had been misspelled.

Sometimes it is difficult to remember a name, particularly if it is hard to pronounce. Rather than even try to learn it, many people ignore it or call the person by an easy nickname. Sid Levy called on a customer for some time whose name was Nicodemus Papadoulos. Most people just called him "Nick." Levy told us: "I made a special effort to say his name over several times to myself before I made my call. When I greeted him by his full name: 'Good afternoon, Mr. Nicodemus Papadoulos,' he was shocked. For what seemed like several minutes there was no reply from him at all. Finally, he said with tears rolling down his cheeks, 'Mr. Levy, in all the fifteen years I have been in this country, nobody has ever made the effort to call me by my right name.' "

What was the reason for Andrew Carnegie's success?

He was called the Steel King; yet he himself knew little about the manufacture of steel. He had hundreds of people working for him who knew far more about steel than he did.

But he knew how to handle people, and that is what made him rich. Early in life, he showed a flair for organization, a genius for leadership. By the time he was ten, he too had discovered the astounding importance people place on their own name. And he used that discovery to win cooperation. To illustrate: When he was a boy back in Scotland, he got hold of a rabbit, a mother

rabbit. Presto! He soon had a whole nest of little rabbits—and nothing to feed them. But he had a brilliant idea. He told the boys and girls in the neighborhood that if they would go out and pull enough clover and dandelions to feed the rabbits, he would name the bunnies in their honor.

The plan worked like magic, and Carnegie never forgot it.

Years later, he made millions by using the same psychology in business. For example, he wanted to sell steel rails to the Pennsylvania Railroad. J. Edgar Thomson was the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad then. So Andrew Carnegie built a huge steel mill in Pittsburgh and called it the "Edgar Thomson Steel Works."

Here is a riddle. See if you can guess it. When the Pennsylvania Railroad needed steel rails, where do you suppose J. Edgar Thomson bought them? . . . From Sears, Roebuck? No. No. You're wrong. Guess again.

When Carnegie and George Pullman were battling each other for supremacy in the railroad sleeping-car business, the Steel King again remembered the lesson of the rabbits.

The Central Transportation Company, which Andrew Carnegie controlled, was fighting with the company that Pullman owned. Both were struggling to get the sleeping-car business of the Union Pacific Railroad, bucking each other, slashing prices, and destroying all chance of profit. Both Carnegie and Pullman had gone to New York to see the board of directors of the Union Pacific. Meeting one evening in the St. Nicholas Hotel, Carnegie said: "Good evening, Mr. Pullman, aren't we making a couple of fools of ourselves?"

"What do you mean?" Pullman demanded.

Then Carnegie expressed what he had on his mind—a merger of their two interests. He pictured in glowing terms the mutual advantages of working with, instead of against, each other. Pullman listened attentively, but he was not wholly convinced. Finally he asked, "What would you call the new company?" and Carnegie replied promptly: "Why, the Pullman Palace Car Company, of course."

Pullman's face brightened. "Come into my room," he said. "Let's talk it over." That talk made industrial history.

This policy of remembering and honoring the names of his friends and business associates was one of the secrets of Andrew Carnegie's leadership. He was proud of the fact that he could call many of his factory workers by their first names, and he boasted that while he was personally in charge, no strike ever disturbed his flaming steel mills.

Benton Love, chairman of Texas Commerce Bancshares, believes that the bigger a corporation gets, the colder it becomes. "One way to warm it up," he said, "is to remember people's names. The executive who tells me he can't remember names is at the same time telling me he can't remember a significant part of his business and is operating on quicksand."

Karen Kirsch of Rancho Palos Verdes, California, a flight attendant for TWA, made it a practice to learn the names of as many passengers in her cabin as possible and use the name when serving them. This resulted in many compliments on her service expressed both to her directly and to the airline. One passenger wrote: "I haven't flown TWA for some time, but I'm going to start flying nothing but TWA from now on. You make me feel that your airline has become a very personalized airline and that is important to me."

People are so proud of their names that they strive to perpetuate them at any cost. Even blustering, hardboiled old P. T. Barnum, the greatest showman of his time, disappointed because he had no sons to carry on his name, offered his grandson, C. H. Seeley, $25,000 if he would call himself "Barnum" Seeley.

For many centuries, nobles and magnates supported artists, musicians and authors so that their creative works would be dedicated to them.

Libraries and museums owe their richest collections to people who cannot bear to think that their names might perish from the memory of the race. The New York Public Library has its Astor and Lenox collections. The Metropolitan Museum perpetuates the names of Benjamin Altman and J. P. Morgan. And nearly every

church is beautified by stained-glass windows commemorating the names of their donors. Many of the buildings on the campus of most universities bear the names of donors who contributed large sums of money for this honor.

Most people don't remember names, for the simple reason that they don't take the time and energy necessary to concentrate and repeat and fix names indelibly in their minds. They make excuses for themselves; they are too busy.

But they were probably no busier than Franklin D. Roosevelt, and he took time to remember and recall even the names of mechanics with whom he came into contact.

To illustrate: The Chrysler organization built a special car for Mr. Roosevelt, who could not use a standard car because his legs were paralyzed. W. F. Chamberlain and a mechanic delivered it to the White House. I have in front of me a letter from Mr. Chamberlain relating his experiences. "I taught President Roosevelt how to handle a car with a lot of unusual gadgets, but he taught me a lot about the fine art of handling people.

"When I called at the White House," Mr. Chamberlain writes, "the President was extremely pleasant and cheerful. He called me by name, made me feel very comfortable, and particularly impressed me with the fact that he was vitally interested in things I had to show him and tell him. The car was so designed that it could be operated entirely by hand. A crowd gathered around to look at the car; and he remarked: 'I think it is marvelous. All you have to do is to touch a button and it moves away and you can drive it without effort. I think it is grand—I don't know what makes it go. I'd love to have the time to tear it down and see how it works.'

"When Roosevelt's friends and associates admired the machine, he said in their presence: 'Mr. Chamberlain, I certainly appreciate all the time and effort you have spent in developing this car. It is a mighty fine job.' He admired the radiator, the special rear-vision mirror and clock, the special spotlight, the kind of upholstery, the sitting position of the driver's seat, the special suitcases in the trunk with his monogram on each suitcase. In other words, he

took notice of every detail to which he knew I had given considerable thought. He made a point of bringing these various pieces of equipment to the attention of Mrs. Roosevelt, Miss Perkins, the Secretary of Labor, and his secretary. He even brought the old White House porter into the picture by saying, 'George, you want to take particularly good care of the suitcases.'

"When the driving lesson was finished, the President turned to me and said: 'Well, Mr. Chamberlain, I have been keeping the Federal Reserve Board waiting thirty minutes. I guess I had better get back to work.'

"I took a mechanic with me to the White House. He was introduced to Roosevelt when he arrived. He didn't talk to the President, and Roosevelt heard his name only once. He was a shy chap, and he kept in the background. But before leaving us, the President looked for the mechanic, shook his hand, called him by name, and thanked him for coming to Washington. And there was nothing perfunctory about his thanks. He meant what he said. I could feel that.

"A few days after returning to New York, I got an autographed photograph of President Roosevelt and a little note of thanks again expressing his appreciation for my assistance. How he found time to do it is a mystery to me."

Franklin D. Roosevelt knew that one of the simplest, most obvious and most important ways of gaining good will was by remembering names and making people feel important—yet how many of us do it?

Half the time we are introduced to a stranger, we chat a few minutes and can't even remember his or her name by the time we say goodbye.

One of the first lessons a politician learns is this: "To recall a voter's name is statesmanship. To forget it is oblivion."

And the ability to remember names is almost as important in business and social contacts as it is in politics.

Napoleon the Third, Emperor of France and nephew of the great Napoleon, boasted that in spite of all his royal duties he could remember the name of every person he met.

His technique? Simple. If he didn't hear the name distinctly, he said, "So sorry. I didn't get the name clearly." Then, if it was an unusual name, he would say, "How is it spelled?"

During the conversation, he took the trouble to repeat the name several times, and tried to associate it in his mind with the person's features, expression and general appearance.

If the person was someone of importance, Napoleon went to even further pains. As soon as His Royal Highness was alone, he wrote the name down on a piece of paper, looked at it, concentrated on it, fixed it securely in his mind, and then tore up the paper. In this way, he gained an eye impression of the name as well as an ear impression.

All this takes time, but "Good manners," said Emerson, "are made up of petty sacrifices."

The importance of remembering and using names is not just the prerogative of kings and corporate executives. It works for all of us. Ken Nottingham, an employee of General Motors in Indiana, usually had lunch at the company cafeteria. He noticed that the woman who worked behind the counter always had a scowl on her face. "She had been making sandwiches for about two hours and I was just another sandwich to her. I told her what I wanted. She weighed out the ham on a little scale, then she gave me one leaf of lettuce, a few potato chips and handed them to me.

"The next day I went through the same line. Same woman, same scowl. The only difference was I noticed her name tag. I smiled and said, 'Hello, Eunice,' and then told her what I wanted. Well, she forgot the scale, piled on the ham, gave me three leaves of lettuce and heaped on the potato chips until they fell off the plate."

We should be aware of the *magic* contained in a name and realize that this single item is wholly and completely owned by the person with whom we are dealing . . . and nobody else. The name sets the individual apart; it makes him or her unique among all others. The information we are imparting or the request we are making takes on a special importance when we

approach the situation with the name of the individual. From the waitress to the senior executive, the name will work magic as we deal with others.

PRINCIPLE 3

Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.